

1 Samuel 12 - Thursday, January 9th, 2014

- It's been three weeks since we've been in our study of 1 Samuel and as such, I'd like to get us caught up so we can hit the ground running.
- At the end of chapter 11, we left all the children of Israel accepting of and rejoicing with Saul after their victory in defeating the Ammonites.
- However, Saul doesn't put to death those, whom we're told at the end of chapter ten, despised him, and wouldn't accept him as their king.

Charles Spurgeon - "Saul proved his valor by defeating Nahash King of the Ammonites, whereupon the people assembled to establish him more fully in his kingdom Samuel took advantage of this to end his official life and to warn the people."

(1) Now Samuel said to all Israel: "Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you. (2) And now here is the king, walking before you; and I am old and grayheaded, and look, my sons *are* with you. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. (3) Here I am. Witness against me before the LORD and before His anointed: Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received *any* bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore *it* to you."

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is it's packed with practical application as it relates to being a godly leader.
- Not just being a godly leader in the arena of our service to the Lord, but being a spiritual leader in the arena of our parenting in the home.
- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a bit as I point out several of the leadership principles I found in just these first three verses in 1st Samuel.

- The first one is godly leaders can handle rejection, as we see in verse one where Samuel says he heeded their voice for a king over them.
- Even though their demanding of a king, like all the other nations around them meant that they had rejected the Lord and Samuel as well.
- This is one of the most difficult issues leaders face, and it's a rare one that can handle such rejection knowing full well the consequences.

- More specifically, the difficult decision of letting those under your leadership whether they are employees or children, learn the hard way.
- Especially when they've just rejected you and your authority over them, as was the case with the Israelites rejection of Samuel over them.
- What adds insult to injury is giving the Lord the elbowroom, as it were, as you sit helplessly by and, in pain, watch them suffer because of it.

- This leadership quality requires tremendous spiritual strength such that you must trust that God wants them right with Him more than you.
- As difficult and painful as it is to take your hands off of their life and let them go their own way instead of God's way; it may be the only way.
- In effect, this is what Samuel is doing here. He's washing his hands of this and letting them have it their way with their own king over them.

- That ties into our second one, which is godly leaders can make excruciatingly difficult decisions as we see in verse two with Samuel's sons.
- Unlike Eli allowing his exceedingly wicked sons to continue serving in the Tabernacle, Samuel made the decision to remove his two sons.
- This because of what we were told back in 1st Samuel chapter eight verses one through five, when Samuel was confronted concerning this.

1 Samuel 8:1-5 (1) Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. (2) The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; *they were* judges in Beersheba. (3) But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice. (4) Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, (5) and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

- Now some suggest Samuel's nepotism in positioning his two sons' as judges, was sin on his part, however, I'm not so quick to believe that.
- Here's why, the text seems to indicate, while Samuel did make his sons judges, they did not become corrupt until after they were serving.
- If that's the case, and I'm of the belief that it in fact is, then Samuel, to his credit, did the right thing, and the hard thing, by removing them.

- This leadership quality requires extraordinary faith, such that you need a spiritual spine to handle the backlash from this type of decision.
- No matter how gracious and loving you are you'll always, without exception, be the bad guy who's really mean and harsh in how you did it.
- It doesn't seem to matter if you have the God given authority as a leader or pastor to ask someone to step down from a ministerial position.

- Over the last thirty years that I've walked with Jesus Christ, I've had the privilege of starting two businesses, and planting two churches.
- It's been my experience, that this dynamic is as understood in the arena of the secular, as it is misunderstood in the arena of the sacred.
- Let me explain, when I, as an employer, terminated an employee I had to just do it however, as a pastor, I don't dare terminate a volunteer.

- I'll take it a step further and suggest that the only thing harder than terminating paid staff or a volunteer servant is doing so with your child.
- This is exactly what Samuel had to do, as difficult as it was, but, he did it in spite of the antagonism and vitriol he knew would come from it.
- It was for this reason that in verse two, Samuel could say he was above reproach by reducing his sons to the level of the children of Israel.

Adam Clarke - "It is generally agreed that these words intimate [imply] that Samuel had deprived them of their public employ, and reduced them to a level with the common people."

- This brings us to our third one, which is, godly leaders have integrity, as we see in verses 2-3 where Samuel asks if he had wronged them.
- Samuel knew he'd never cheated or oppressed them, nor had he ever taken a bribe from them, yet he has the integrity to ask this of them.
- So much so, that even if he had unknowingly wronged someone, all they would have to do is come forward, and he would right the wrong.

- This leadership quality requires a genuine humility, and teachability, such that you must first admit that you were even wrong to begin with.
- The problem is that, "I was wrong," are amongst the three hardest words one could ever utter, especially those in positions of leadership.
- One of the reasons it's so difficult is because the one in authority wrongly believes that admitting they were wrong is a sign of weakness.

- Actually, it's the opposite that's true in that it's meekness not weakness, and the two are not synonymous in terms as some wrongly think.
- The difference between meekness and weakness is this; meekness is strength under control, and weakness is no strength and no control.
- Samuel in his meekness had the strength of character under the control of the Holy Spirit, as evidenced by his willingness to be vulnerable.

I like how one commentator summed this up when he wrote, "Israel knew Samuel was a good, godly leader. He did not lead them for what he could get from them, but for what he could give to them."

(4) And they said, "You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man's hand." (5) Then he said to them, "The LORD *is* witness against you, and His anointed *is* witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." And they answered, "*He is* witness."

- What Samuel does here is characteristic of yet another requirement for leadership, which is the recognizing of God's anointing on another.
- We see this in verse five where he says the Lord is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day in which he's referring to Saul.
- In other words, Samuel was not only recognizing God's anointing and calling on Saul, he was willing to fade into the backdrop of obscurity.

- This leadership quality requires one be secure in who they are, and as such, not threatened by those whom God may raise up after them.
- Sadly, many a leader under the banner of their own insecurity will only surround themselves with those who pose no threat to their position.
- It's a rare leader that's secure enough to surround themselves with those who possess the anointing and strength in areas they're weak in.

- There's something else here we need to take note of before we move on, and it has to do with Samuel's insistence on the Lord's witness.
- Here's what I'm thinking, this is profound wisdom on Samuel's part by virtue of how they could not blame him for anything down the road.
- More specifically, Israel couldn't accuse Samuel or even blame Samuel for their disenchantment with Saul because of this witness this day.

(6) Then Samuel said to the people, "*It is* the LORD who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. (7) Now therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did to you and your fathers: (8) When Jacob had gone into Egypt, and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. (9) And when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them. (10) Then they cried out to the LORD, and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and Ashtoreths; but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You.' (11) And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you dwelt in safety. (12) And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the LORD your God *was* your king. (13) "Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen *and* whom you have desired. And take note, the LORD has set a king over you.

- It seems Samuel deems it necessary to, very clearly and in no uncertain terms, say that they are making the biggest mistake of their lives.
- Though it wouldn't have been likely to make any difference, it's unclear to me whether or not he's giving them an out to change their minds.
- Verse thirteen seems to indicate that it's too late, as evidenced by Samuel saying, here's the king whom you've chosen and you've desired.

(14) If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God. (15) However, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as *it was* against your fathers. (16) "Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes: (17) Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the LORD, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking a king for yourselves." (18) So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. (19) And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves."

- I find it interesting that they're sorry, but their sorrow does not rise to the level of leading to their repentance, not wanting a king over them.
- Rather, they still want a king over them knowing full well that in so doing they've added this evil of asking for it to their sins against the Lord.
- I also find it interesting that it would take the miraculous sign of thunder and rain for the people to even greatly fear the Lord and Samuel.

- The question becomes, why would Samuel call on the Lord to send thunder and rain for them to see how great their wickedness had been?
- Furthermore, why would Samuel call down thunder and rain during the wheat harvest, which was during a season when it would never rain.
- I'm of the belief, it's because the Lord wants their rejection of Him, and their demand from Him, indelibly etched in their hearts and minds.

Henry Morris - "A thunderstorm during the time of wheat harvest was almost unheard of in Israel and was a miraculous answer to Samuel's prayer. It served as God's reminder to the people of His approval of Samuel's ministry and of their wickedness in seeking a change."

- Be that as it may, let me hasten to say, as we'll see next, the Lord isn't going to hold this against them damning and dooming them forever.

(20) Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. (21) And do not turn aside; for *then you would go* after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they *are* nothing. (22) For the LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people. (23) Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. (24) Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. (25) But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

- Here Samuel encourages them in spite of their wickedness to not turn away from the Lord, but instead to serve the Lord with all their heart.
- In other words, it's not about how bad you've been it's about how good God always is in spite of how bad we always are, to turn it for good.
- So the chapter ends but not before giving us one more leadership quality when he says it would be sin to not pray for them and teach them.